

Remarks

Claim Amendments

The Examiner will see that many claims have been amended. The majority of these amendments are to improve clarity and conciseness of the claims. These amendments do not significantly alter the scope of the claims as a whole.

However, two specific amendments have been introduced which do affect the scope.

Firstly, the Examiner will see that the claims have been amended to include the feature that association data is input into or read from path overheads of a plurality of virtual containers. This feature corresponds closely with the features of claims 11 and 21 which the Examiner has already indicated contain allowable subject matter.

However, the feature is broader (less limiting) than those claims in that it covers the association data being in any portion of the path overhead, rather than just the specific K3 byte. Similarly, the feature is broader than the features of claims 10 and 20 (pending) and 35 (now withdrawn) in that it covers association data being in any portion of the paths overhead, rather than just the path trace byte.

Basis for the path overhead feature is found in the description at page 15 line 29 to page 16 line 8, so there is no question of added matter. The Examiner will also see that claims 3 and 33, which relate to the association data being incorporated into the payload of the virtual containers, have been withdrawn.

Secondly, the Examiner will see that claim 1, and dependent claims have been amended from 'a method of transporting data' to 'a method of preparing data for transmission, Consequently, the step of 'outputting said plurality of virtual

containers onto a synchronous digital network' has been deleted. This amendment recognizes the fact that the actual transportation of virtual containers over a synchronous digital network is entirely conventional and not an essential feature of the present invention. It is submitted that this amendment has no material effect on the allowability of the claims.

Claim Rejections

The Examiner has objected to various of the claims under 35 USC §102(e) as being anticipated by Sajjonmaa (US 5,706,285).

The Examiner has referred specifically to column 5 lines 34 to 45 which describe the introduction of overhead bytes OH₁ – OH_N in front of the cell blocks CB. However, the Examiner will see that the overhead bytes are included in the payloads of the SDH virtual containers rather than in the path overheads. This is illustrated in figures 3 and 4 which show the introduction of overhead bytes in front of cell blocks. The 2Mbit/s signals generated are then transmitted over the SDH network in a conventional manner.

There is absolutely no teaching or suggestion in Sajjonmaa that path overheads of the SDH virtual containers should be used for association data. One advantage of using the path overhead rather than the payload is that efficiency is improved since no payload data needs to be displaced by the association data. This advantage is described in the description of the present invention at page 16 lines 3 to 4.

A further advantage of the present invention over Sajjonmaa is as follows. In Sajjonmaa, a cell synchronization mechanism is required to ensure that a receiver is able to distinguish overhead bytes from data. This is achieved, as described in column 5 line 51 to column 6 line 11, by introducing a resynchronization word F into the transmission signals. The further advantage of

the present invention is that resynchronization mechanisms are not required since the association data is distinguishable by the receiver from payload data through the SDH framing mechanism.

The Examiner further rejects several of the claims under 35 USC 103(a) as being unpatentable over Sajjonmaa in view of Oksanen (US 5,666,351). Applicants submit that the Examiner's rejections are moot in view of the claim amendments and submissions set out above.

In conclusion, Applicants believe that the claims as currently amended are patentably distinguished from the prior art and that this application is now in order for allowance. Such action is therefore solicited.

An appropriate petition for extension of time is also submitted herewith.

Respectfully submitted,

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